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ABSTRACT

In order to assist states in developing model programs, this report examines the common characteristics and strengths of a number of state programs that coordinate social services for at-risk students and their families. After discussing the characteristics of at-risk children and their families, the report presents a comprehensive and collaborative model involving the family, the schools, community-based service agencies, community leaders, state human service agencies, and state leaders which can result in a more efficient and effective service delivery mechanism. Programs based on such a model should stress local empowerment and flexibility, parental involvement, and adequate budgets, and should emphasize evaluation and accountability. This social service coordination model can easily be tied into the goals of President Bush's America 2000 initiative, which sets specific goals for educational achievement by the year 2000. An appendix provides a brief outline of 20 state coordination programs. The outlines include the name and telephone number of a contact person for each program. Contains 54 references. (MDM)

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS
EDUCATION TASK FORCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AT-RISK STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Children in America today bring many problems with them as they enter the schoolhouse door. Some suffer from lack of health care, hunger, drug abuse, parental abuse, and mental health problems just to name a few.

We can no longer expect the schools to act alone as both the social service provider and educator. Schools need the assistance and collaboration of agency service providers in the community and from the state. Through a collaborative effort, we can begin to assure that all children come to school prepared to learn and those children and their families most at-risk receive the services necessary to maintain or achieve self-sufficiency.

The NCLG At-Risk Subcommittee met in August of 1991 and decided to focus its efforts on recent developments by various states to implement a system of coordinated social services to students in school and to their families. This report examines the common characteristics and strengths of these programs in the hope that other states may begin or add to their proposals. By holistically addressing the needs of the at-risk student using the services of the community, the school will benefit and be able to concentrate on its main mission -- to educate.

The problems of many of our children and families are magnified by the changing society. Technological advances have created an age of instant data-exchange. The industrial era has been replaced by the information age, and with it a fast-growing service industry is replacing a manufacturing society past generations enjoyed.

The decrease of unskilled labor jobs often means increased unemployment for those who choose not to finish high school. In 1990 and beyond, three out of every four jobs will require education or technical training beyond high school. By the year 2000, new jobs will require a work force whose median level of education is 13.5 years. The Hudson Institute's "Workforce 2000" report warns that "unless work force basic skills are raised substantially and quickly we shall have more joblessness among the least skilled, accompanied by a chronic shortage of workers with advanced skills."

As the 21st century approaches, human capital will become as critical an asset to business survival as plant, equipment or financial capital is now. The development of this human capital also becomes vital to the survival of our families, communities, and this nation's democracy.

Who represents this human capital of the future and what is their status? Children who attend fourth grade in the 1991-92 school year will graduate from high school in the year 2000. The children who follow will make up our work force in the 21st century. Unfortunately, the status of children in the 90s is not good.

- Nearly 25 percent of children under six live in poverty. In fact, children under six are more likely to be poor than any other age group. (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1990)

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- Everyday in America:
  2,756 teens become pregnant;
  1,340 babies are born to teen mothers;
  2,754 babies are born out of wedlock; and
  2,685 babies are born into poverty.
  (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- If a child is born to a single mother, chances are one in two that she or he will live in poverty. Further, if a teen happens to be a parent, chances are 70 percent that she or he will live in poverty. (Children's Defense Fund, 1990)

- Due to the abuse of alcohol by their mothers, every year about 40,000 children are born with alcohol-related birth defects, such as attention disorders, hyperactivity, speech-language disorders and the most serious disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome. (Lucille Newman, Education Commission of the States, 1990.)

- In 1990, there was a reported abuse or neglect of a child every 13 seconds. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- An average of more than three children a day died from child maltreatment from 1987 to 1990. An estimated 1,211 children died from abuse or neglect in 1990. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- Every year, as many as 2 million American children -- 100,000 every night -- experience homelessness. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- In the U.S., between 9 million and 12 million American children have no health insurance. (Children's Defense Fund, 1990)

- An estimated two-thirds of the three million American children with serious emotional disturbances do not get the help they need. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- Almost 1.8 million teen-agers were the victims of violent crimes in 1988. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young people ages 15 to 24. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause, and suicides are third. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991)

- The dropout rate is equally alarming. Everyday, 1,512 youngsters drop out of school. (Children's Defense Fund, 1990)

- Of those who stay in school, studies show half graduate without reading, math and science skills that would allow them to perform moderately complex tasks, such as summarizing a newspaper editorial or calculating decimals. (Children's Defense Fund, 1990)

We cannot afford to lose any more children from our schools. Every child who is at risk of dropping out before achieving at least a high school diploma robs society of an enlightened, productive citizen. The dropout also is more likely to burden society through increased welfare costs, and/or the cost of crime and incarceration. And too often the dropout establishes a pattern to be followed by his or her own children.

AT-RISK DEFINED

For consistency purposes, this briefing will use the same definition for "At-Risk Youth" as the 1991 National Conference of Lieutenant Governors (NCLG) Innovations In Education report. The term "At-Risk Youth" refers to (1) a student with an academic and/or school related behavioral problem that might cause him or her to drop out of school, and/or (2) a student with personal, family, peer, or environmental problems that endanger his or her physical, emotional or mental health. Certain conditions or predictors indicate students who have greater potential to be "at-risk" than others. The list that follows is broken down into three categories and is an aggregate of the factors used by the states.

Family Related Conditions:

1) Students whose parents are divorced or separated.
2) Students whose parent(s) abuse alcohol or other drugs.
3) Students who have only one parent.
4) Students who have teen-age parent(s).
5) Students who have suffered a death in the family.
6) Students who live in dysfunctional homes in which activities are not supervised and have fewer study aids and opportunities for non-school learning.
7) Students whose parent(s) are illiterate.
8) Students whose parent(s) are mobile.
9) Students who are physically, sexually or psychologically abused by their parents.

Social-Economic Conditions:

1) Students who have a different cultural background.
2) Students who have a different racial or ethnic background.
3) Students who have a different religious background.
4) Students who come from a different geographic location.
5) Students who live in poverty.
6) Students who live as migrants.

Student/Self Conditions:

1) Students who have chronic absenteeism, truancy or behavior problems.
2) Students who have health problems.
3) Students who perform poorly in their studies.
4) Students who have become involved in the court system.
5) Students who possess high levels of giftedness or creativity.
6) Students who are challenged by physical or mental disabilities.
7) Students who lack social competence or interaction skills.
8) Students with limited English language skills.
9) Students with low self-esteem, who have attempted suicide or use alcohol or other drugs.
10) Students who lack social/emotional maturity.
11) Students who become pregnant.
12) Students who have time-consuming jobs.

School districts across the country have implemented many different types of programs to address the educational needs of the "at-risk" student. The various strategies have kept the onus on the school and its professionals. Charles Bruner, in his April 1991 publication, Thinking Collaboratively, states that "strategies focusing upon individual students in those schools may occasionally succeed in improving an individual student's educational performance and even economic outlook, but community-wide strategies are necessary if most students are to escape pervasive environmental risks."

THE MODEL

At-risk students bring a diversity of problems to school that prevent them from learning to their full potential. By developing a comprehensive and collaborative model involving the family, the schools, community-based service agencies, other community leaders, state human service agencies, and state leaders, a more efficient and effective service delivery mechanism can result. To assist states in developing their own models, a summary of existing programs broken into five key areas follows.

The five areas are: 1) Overall Structure 2) Program Characteristics 3) Budget 4) Implementation 5) Evaluation.

I. Overall Structure

A. State Interagency Oversight - To ensure full participation by all state agencies involved, each state formed a collaborative interagency oversight board led by the Governor or Lt. Governor and composed of the cabinet level human service and education directors. Some states included legislative leaders. The major responsibilities of this oversight board involved:

1. Overseeing state agency involvement with local communities;
2. Eliminating bureaucratic barriers; and
3. Developing creative funding mechanisms.

B. Local Community Collaborative Councils - Each local community involved created a council responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the program to the students in the schools and their families. The size of the local council varied, but membership commonly included representatives from the schools, parents of students, community based service organizations, businesses, churches, local political leaders and other community leaders. The major responsibilities of the council included:

1. Overseeing implementation of the program;
2. Assessing the needs of the students and family and identifying and improving services to meet those needs;
3. Recruiting and promoting collaboration of community-based service organizations and encouraging collaboration among them;
4. Working with state agencies to make their services more effective; and
5. Hiring staff to implement policies and procedures.

II. Program Characteristics

Local Empowerment and Flexibility - To ensure success of this initiative, states promote local ownership and flexibility. Local communities must take control of their response to the issues, concerns and problems of the students in school and their families. To accomplish this challenge, states have created a flexible framework which promotes collaboration between the state agencies and local community leaders. The leaders from the schools and community service agencies must initiate the collaboration process by bringing together the organizations that can make a difference. They must address the needs of the students and their families and develop ways those needs can be met by local resources and agencies and/or state agencies. The states change their role from inflexible, "here we are, come to us," to more of a supportive, "how can we be more effective in your community" role. It is up to the creativeness of the local community though, to develop the mechanisms that will translate into all students coming to school prepared to learn.

Parental Involvement - Study after study concludes that a strong and direct correlation exists between parental involvement and student success. When parents are involved in positive ways, schools improve, and children do better. States have incorporated this concept into their social service coordination models. Parents can be active participants in three ways.

1) Parents are a key representative member of the Local Community Collaborative Council. In this role, parents will assist in the development of program characteristics that ensure accessibility ease and provision of services that matter most.

2) Parents can be active users of the wide range of services that will be offered in the models. By parents taking advantage of these services, especially with their school-age children, a positive, caring message is sent to the children which translates into a more successful student.

3) Parents can play an active role in developing programs to assist other parents or volunteering in schools. Through the development of support groups, parents can give direction to the local council on the needs of parents and their children.

The September, 1991 issue of THE ERIC Review from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, summarizes the role of parents and education. "Parent involvement is not an educational panacea... parents...have to raise their children, who are more than ever on their own. To achieve better school systems, we have to re-create families and communities that are now seriously disorganized, in new forms that the changing times demand and for all social classes. Schools, in turn, have to become flexible enough to restructure and innovative and change old models and practices long proved ineffective-even if this means radical change in governance, curriculum, and professional training. Parental involvement is a tool for these changes because it is a mechanism that links society, schools, and homes."

Family Focused - One of the key areas states highlighted as needing change was the current fragmented system of service delivery, both at the state and local level. In many cases, the same family must travel to several different agencies in different areas of the community to receive the services they need. This in itself is a barrier. States have developed different methods to change the fragmented system to one that focuses on the needs of the family. This includes repositioning staff to places of convenience for the family; or taking it a step further and locating many services in one location resulting in a "one-stop shopping center." A third method is increased coordination through effective case management performed by an individual located in one agency or by an interagency team from several agencies.

Atelia Melaville and Martin Blank developed the following five elements to ensure high quality comprehensive service delivery. (The five are explained in greater detail in their 1991 publication What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services.)

1) Ensuring a wide array of prevention, treatment, and support services to sufficiently respond and effectively neutralize risk factors that can lead to negative actions;

2) Developing techniques that ensure children and families actually receive the services they need such as one-stop shopping or improved case-mangagement;

3) Focusing on the whole family instead of only the child in school or just the parent(s).

4) Empowering children and families by giving them considerable voice in identifying and planning how best to meet their own needs; and

5) Determining the effectiveness of the services by measuring the impact on the lives of the children and family and not just marking how many people are seen by the various agencies.

Through these various measures, states hope to produce easily accessible and effective services for the whole family.

Collaboration - The issue of growing demands for services at a time when resources are scarce continue to force states into making one of two difficult decisions: service cutbacks or increasing revenue. States look to collaboration as the third option, maintaining or increasing service levels at a decreased or level cost.

Collaboration involves bringing together different organizations and their resources to reach agreed upon goals. Collaboration requires communication, maturity, trust and a shared vision that can lead to local community empowerment and involvement by diverse constituencies.

Many factors have contributed to the current system of fragmented services, turf battles and wall building among state and local service agencies. Two of the most common reasons identified by the states were categorical funding and lack of ability to share client-specific information.

The state interagency oversight committee has the potential to offset both concerns by realigning the funding mechanisms to the agencies and developing confidentiality waiver forms and compatible client information systems for increased coordination and collaboration of services to families.

Another step necessary for collaboration to take hold is training for all professionals and administrators involved in service delivery. Bruner explains collaboration with the following criteria:

1) Jointly developing and agreeing to a set of common goals and directions;
2) Sharing responsibility for obtaining those goals; and
3) Working together to achieve those goals using the expertise of each collaborator.

The end result of successful collaboration among agencies is a more effective and efficient system of service delivery to families.

Available Services - The final area of Program Characteristics to be developed is the type of services the states highlighted to meet the needs of the students and their families. The services most frequently mentioned are listed below:

1) Health Care
2) Mental Health
3) Child Protection
4) Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention
5) Domestic Violence Intervention
6) Nutrition
7) Adult Literacy
8) Job Training
9) Early Intervention
10) Recreation

Ensuring that families can easily access these types of services is important, but states emphasized the importance of developing prevention activities. The Children's Defense Fund, in the 1989 publication, A Vision for America's Future: An Agenda for the 90s states that "prevention is generally cheaper and more effective than crisis intervention and remediation. Nonetheless, our society has committed few resources to help families until children are seriously harmed or strike out at others."

III. Budget

As mentioned earlier, current funding techniques have added to the problems of inefficient and fragmented service delivery. To remedy this situation, some states are financing their social service coordination models by pooling together funds from different sources that were appropriated for similar programs. In some cases, waivers were sought from the federal government for approval, but in more cases than not, the agreements had to be made among the state agencies.

Other states appropriated one time trust funds and used the interest as the source of revenue to begin building their models. Some states were able to prioritize new funding to start up their models, and still others developed their programs as a public/private venture receiving funds from businesses or foundations to test a limited number of pilot sites.

As these social service coordination models institutionalize their collaborative efforts and begin implementing prevention techniques, cost savings may result. With local communities taking charge of their residents' needs, states look forward to gathering specific information which will lead toward more accurate prioritization of service needs.

IV. Implementation

The implementation of the social service coordination models varied by state. Some states implemented a full program with legislative authority, others are piloting a smaller scale without legislation. Appendix A shows the various implementation strategies used by the different states and their contact people. Although most of the programs are new, enough states have undertaken this initiative to act as a resource for other states interested in pursuing a social services coordination.

V. Evaluation and Accountability

The states developed different goal statements in creating their social services coordination model including an emphasis on self-sufficiency, ensuring all children come to school prepared to learn, the belief in the strength and abilities of families to survive.

All of them come back to a common thread of strengthening the family. By improving the well-being of the family, many of our social ills will begin to recede including the problems of our at-risk children.

All state programs developing the social service coordination initiative stressed the importance of evaluation and accountability. As states boldly venture into this new area of collaboration of social services to the children in schools and their families, they will want to ensure only effective measures are kept. Just as the private sector "market tests" new products, states also must ask whether the family well-being is increasing and whether there is a measurable improvement of at-risk students and other indicators.

AMERICA 2000

Stating that "There will be no renaissance without revolution, ... We must transform America's schools." President George Bush on April 18, 1991, launched the American 2000 initiative.

AMERICA 2000 is a strategy to help reach the six goals developed by the President and the Governors of our 50 states. It provides a national framework for the way we think about education. The comprehensive

strategy being undertaken by states and localities is intended to help communities transform their schools. This is not another federal program telling communities what to do and how to do it; instead, AMERICA 2000 is about communities taking charge and meeting the goals their way, with other government levels lending support as needed.

The social service coordination models being implemented or developed by states can easily be tied into the six goals of AMERICA 2000. These goals are:

1) All children in America will start school ready to learn.
   By coordinating the services necessary to ensure a student is physically, mentally and emotionally ready to start school will complement any pre-kindergarden programs a child may have taken.

2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
   The social service coordination models will help prevent students from falling behind in school and/or intervene with students most at-risk of dropping out, thereby increasing the graduation rate.

3) American students will leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography.
   The various models being implemented by schools all emphasize the importance of assisting students' needs so they will not bring their problems with them to school. By ensuring all students come to school ready to learn, the states hope that performance will improve in the different subject areas.

4) U.S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
   This follows the same approach as #3.

5) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
   The social services coordination models being developed and implemented in the states focus on children in school and the their families. To the extent that the models develop adult literacy classes or work force training services for parents who may need them, this America 2000 goal can be accomplished.

6) Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
   This goal can be a natural outcome of successful social service coordination models for two reasons. First, the students will be receiving the assistance they need to be successful in school and may not have the desire to experiment with drugs or gangs. Second, the parents will become more involved with the school and help make it a strong community goal to keep drugs and gangs out.

AMERICA 2000 speaks to a new way of educating American students. It calls for the community to take greater charge of its future. It calls for the strengthening of the family. These are the same goals of the state's new initiatives to coordinate social services to the children in school and their families. These models will help states achieve the goals of AMERICA 2000.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to see that we will have difficulty effectively teaching students who come to school hungry, abused or suffering from other mental or emotional problems. And we don't need research papers to tell us that we cannot treat the child separately without reaching out to the entire family. Parents are the child's first teacher. To make the parent strong and independent results in similar traits for the children.

States have taken the lead and developed a new approach to reaching the at-risk student. By addressing the child's needs holistically including the needs of his/her family, the child will be able to come to school ready to learn and achieve to his/her full potential. The new approach does not translate into new and costly services; but instead, through a collaborative process between the family, schools, communities and local and state service agencies, a more efficient and effective method of service delivery results. Add to that formula local initiative and planning, and increased parental involvement and states will produce a citizenry that is better able to reach its potential.

Charles Bruner's Thinking Collaboratively concludes that policy makers and professionals generally agree that at-risk families can be helped, provided someone-a school teacher, a community service worker, a minister, or some other caring adult-connects with that family to provide guidance and help the child experience success. Testimonials abound from highly successful adults who considered themselves "at-risk" youth and point to a caring adult who stuck with them and made a critical difference in their lives.

The states involved with social service coordination models have the ability to work with local communities to make this connection happen.

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STATE SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES

STATE/PROGRAM NAME	YEAR IMPLEMENTED	TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION	AGE GROUP	CONTACT NAME
Colorado Meeting the Needs of Students At-Risk Program	1989-90	Grant Program No Legislation	K-12	David Smith, Director High Risk Intervention Unit (303) 866-6861
Connecticut Family Resource Center Program	1988	3 Pilots Legislation	0-8 yrs.	Paul Vivian, Director (203) 566-4580
Delaware Colonial School Dist. School Dropout Demonstration Assistant Program	1988	Federal Grant Local Program No Legislation	K-12	Ron Gottshall Program Coordinator Colonial School Dist. New Castle, Delaware (302) 323-2861
Illinois Project SUCCESS	2/92	5 Pilots No Legislation	P-K-8th	Gary Laszewski Asst. to Lt. Governor for Education (217) 782-3734
Iowa School Based Youth Services	1989-90	Legislation	K-9	Ray Horley Dept. of Education Des Moines, Iowa 5031 (515) 281-3966
Kentucky Family Resource & Youth Services Centers	1991-92	Grant Program Legislation	K-12	Ronnie Dunn, Director (502) 564-4986

APPENDIX A
(Cont.)

STATE/PROGRAM NAME	YEAR IMPLEMENTED	TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION	AGE GROUP	CONTACT NAME
Michigan Communities First	1991	Cooperative services with Dept. of Social Services, Dept. of Labor and Dept. of Education	K-12	Stephanie Comai-Page (517) 373-3400
Minnesota Way to Grow	1985	No Legislation Agreement between State, County, City and Schools of Minneapolis	0-5 yrs.	Richard Hammen Exec. Director Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Bd. (612) 348-6995
Missouri Caring Communities	1989	2 Pilots No Legislation	K-12	Joan Solomon, Director Urban Education Dept. of Elem. & Sec. Education (314) 751-2931
Nevada Washoe At-Risk Task Force	1989	No Legislation County Initiated	K-12	Jan Miller At-Risk Program Coord Washoe Co. School Dist (702) 348-0200
New Jersey School Based Social Service Program	1988	Grant Program Legislation	K-12	Roberta Knowlton, Director (609) 292-7816
North Dakota Coordination of Programs for Children At-Risk	1989	Leg. created Children's Services Coordinating Committee consisting of all state agency heads providing services to children	0-18yrs.	John Sauter Executive Director (701) 224-3742

APPENDIX A
(Cont.)

STATE/PROGRAM NAME	YEAR IMPLEMENTED	TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION	AGE GROUP	CONTACT NAME
South Caroline Target 2000	1989	Legislation 27 Pilot Projects	P-K-12	John Tudor Program Supervisor Dept. of Education's Dropout Prevention & Retrieval Team (803) 734-8477
South Dakota Youth At-Risk Trust Fund	7/91	Legislation Grants awarded	0-18yrs.	Christie Johnson, Coo South Dakota Youth & Family Alliance (605) 773-3383
Texas Elementary At-Risk Programs	1989-90	5 Pilots Legislation	K-6	Brian Graham Special Asst. to Lt. Governor (512) 463-0176
Texas Communities In Schools	1979	Model Program Legislation	K-12	Susan Hopkins State Director Communities in School (512) 463-0425
Utah Master Plan for Services for Students At Risk	8/88	Grant Program No Legislation	K-12	Stevan J. Kukic, Chair. Interagency Team for the Development of Services for Students At Risk Utah Office of Ed. (801) 538-7762
West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children & Families	8/30/90	Legislation	0-18yrs.	Lyle Sattes Governor's Cabinet on Children & Families (304) 348-0600

APPENDIX A
(Cont.)

STATE/PROGRAM NAME	YEAR IMPLEMENTED	TYPE OF IMPLEMENTATION	AGE GROUP	CONTACT NAME
Wisconsin School & Social Service Collaborative Projects	1992	Leg. Pending 3 Pilots 3 Years	K-12	Victor Contrucci Division Administrator Dept. of Public Instruction (608) 266-1649
Wyoming At Risk Program	5/80	Policy State Bd. of Ed	K-12	Diana Ohman State Super. of Public Instruction (307) 777-6808

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Let's Do It Our Way: Working Together for Educational Excellence, by MDC, Inc. This handbook for everyone explains why it is important that all members of the community work with schools to educate young people and outlines step by step how to set up a collaborative.

Changing Delivery Systems: Addressing the Fragmentation of Children and Youth Services, by the Education Commission of the States and the National Conference of State Legislatures. This work describes collaborative strategies state agencies can use to improve youth services and stretch limited fiscal dollars.

Guiding Youth to Success: What Schools and Communities Can Do, by MDC, Inc. Examples of successful collaboratives are combined with a step-by-step approach to creating a collaborative to meet the needs of your own school.

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Human Development and Family Relations
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